

## Message Text

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E.O. 11652: XGDS-2

TAGS: EG, IS, PINR

SUBJECT: INTSUM 638 - AUGUST 29, 1978

LONDON FOR GLASPIE  
PARIS FOR NICHOLAS MURPHY  
OTHER ADDRESSEES FOR CHIEFS OF MISSION

1. LEBANON. BEIRUT'S RELATIVE CALM WAS SHATTERED YESTERDAY AS HEAVY FIGHTING BROKE OUT IN EAST BEIRUT. SYRIAN FORCES USED TANKS AND ARTILLERY, AND THE CHRISTIANS RELIED ON ROCKET PROPELLED GRENADES AND MORTARS. THE RENEWED FIGHTING APPEARS TO BE THE RESULT OF THE CLASHES WHICH OCCURRED IN NORTH LEBANON OVER THE WEEKEND.

2. THIS LATEST OUTBURST STEMS FROM THE EFFORT BY SYRIAN FORCES OVER THE PAST SEVERAL WEEKS TO TIGHTEN THEIR GRIP ON CHRISTIAN AREAS. THE SYRIANS DURING THIS PERIOD HAVE ORDERED PHALANGE AND NATIONAL LIBERAL PARTY OFFICES CLOSED IN KEY CITIES OF THE BEKAA AND NORTHERN LEBANON, SEIZED ARMS CACHES BELONGING TO THESE PARTIES AND FORCED MEMBERS OF THESE GROUPS TO FLEE, AND BACKED FORMER PRESIDENT FRANJIYAH AND HIS SUPPORTERS IN DISPUTES WITH OTHER CHRISTIAN GROUPS.

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3. THE RECENT WAVE OF VIOLENCE BEGAN ON AUGUST 24 WHEN FRANJIYAH'S MILITIAMEN KILLED EIGHT SUSPECTED MEMBERS OF THE PHALANGE IN AN AMBUSH. CLASHES BETWEEN SYRIAN FORCES AND LOCAL PHALANGISTS FOLLOWED. OVER THE WEEKEND, THE SYRIANS TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THE TENSION FOLLOWING THE AMBUSH AND, USING TANKS AND HELIBORNE ASSAULT UNITS, OCCUPIED MOST OF THE DISTRICTS OF KOURA, BATROUN, AND BESHARRI.

4. THE CHRISTIANS NOW FIND THEMSELVES IN AN INCREASINGLY VULNERABLE POSITION. THE AREA UNDER THEIR CONTROL NOW IS RESTRICTED TO THE DISTRICTS OF JBAYL, KESRAWAN, METN AND PORTIONS OF EAST BEIRUT. ACCESS TO ARMS COMING IN BY SEA ALONG THE COAST NORTH OF THE MAIN CHRISTIAN CENTER OF JOUNIYEH IS BECOMING MORE DIFFICULT. FURTHERMORE, THEY HAVE A SEVERE POPULATION CRISIS. THE CHRISTIAN ENCLAVE NORTH OF BEIRUT IS BEING SWAMPED BY REFUGEES FROM THE BATTLE ZONES, IMPOSING GREAT HARDSHIPS ON THE OTHER CIVILIANS AND LOGISTIC DIFFICULTIES ON THE MILITIAS.

5. CONFRONTED BY SYRIAN MILITARY ACTIONS IN NORTHERN LEBANON, THE CHRISTIANS ARE DOUBTFUL THAT INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE WILL FORCE THE SYRIANS TO STOP. IN THESE CIR-

CUMSTANCES, CHRISTIAN OPTIONS ARE LIMITED. YET THE DESPERATION OF THE MILITIAS IS LIKELY TO CAUSE THEM, OVER THE NEXT FEW WEEKS, TO STRIKE AT THE SYRIANS WHENEVER AND WHEREVER THEY CAN.

6. AMONG THE MORE LIKELY CHRISTIAN MILITARY ACTIONS AGAINST THE SYRIANS ARE:

(A) THE FIGHTING IN BEIRUT COULD INCREASE; EAST BEIRUT IS THE STRONGHOLD OF THE CHRISTIANS AND THEY FEEL THAT THEY CAN INFLICT HEAVIER CASUALTIES ON THE SYRIANS IN URBAN AREAS THAN IN THE COUNTRYSIDE;

(B) MORE CLASHES IN THE NORTHERN DISTRICTS CAN BE  
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EXPECTED AS VILLAGERS ATTEMPT TO PREVENT SYRIAN DOMINATION;

(C) HEAVIER FIGHTING IN THE BEKAA IS PROBABLE AS THE PHALANGE TRIES TO RESIST THE CLOSING OF ITS OFFICES; AND

(D) MAJOR HADDAD'S FORCES IN SOUTHERN LEBANON ARE LIKELY TO RESUME SHELLING OF PALESTINIAN POSITIONS IN AN ATTEMPT TO GIVE MORAL SUPPORT TO THE CHRISTIANS IN THE NORTH.  
(SECRET) CHRISTOPHER

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## Message Attributes

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